Theresa Williams September 14, 2010

In “Beholding” Rosemarie Garland-Thomson asserts that people should learn how to look at individuals with distinct differences in an open-minded, equal way. Garland-Thomson notes that when people stare it creates mutual recognition. She believes that we shouldn’t not stare; we should just learn how to stare in a way that promotes reciprocal respect. She references Susan Sontag when she states that the urge to stare at human deviation is an abhorrent desire; however it can be compensated by identifying empathically with that person (200). She goes on to say that “good staring” does exist when you see a person, recognize their struggles and start political action toward change. Garland-Thomson also references Elaine Scarry who believes that staring is a sign of noticing beauty and beauty can generate social justice. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson states “We become ethical starers by being conscious in the presence of something that compels our intense attention” (201). When we notice and think about what is making us stare we can start to recognize something new that we should understand.

Garland-Thomson writes about Harriet McBryde Johnson, a person with disabilities and deformities who enjoys her life and expresses contentment. She goes on to say that people with deformities need to show the world their lives; People need to understand that “stareable” people have lives similar to everyone. Then the world can start to appreciate and accommodate the human differences that segregate us (203). Garland-Thomson believes that to teach the world how to stare correctly, people with disabilities need to have more public presence. Staring can be a form of communication in which people find a mutual understanding. She believes this will create familiarity and enhance knowledge about human variations and the need for people to recognize and appreciate both similarities and differences.